

Personality attributes and psychological symptoms of immigrant youth as predictors of perceived discrimination against the self and against the ethnic group

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Athena Studies of Resilient Adaptation

This study is part of the ongoing Athena Studies of Resilient Adaptation (**AStRA**), a collaborative project¹ focused on immigrant youth.

¹ A collaboration between the *Department of Psychology of the University of Athens, Greece*, the *Institute of Child Development of the University of Minnesota, USA*, and *Humbolt University, Germany*

Purpose of the study

To examine the relationship between perceived discrimination and

- individual personality attributes
- psychological symptoms.

What is perceived discrimination?

Perceived discrimination refers to the awareness of being discriminated against, by groups and/or individuals, with subsequent threat of disparagement of their social identity.

One perceives discrimination

- Against the self, because of one's ethnic group membership
- Against the ethnic group

Why perceived discrimination?

- Objective discrimination is **difficult** to measure
- The subjective experience and unique perception of the world have been argued to be ultimately **the most important factors** for youth's adaptation and well being

Magnusson & Stattin, 2006;
Verkuyten, 2002

Why is perceived discrimination important?

- The perception of discrimination consists a significant psychological reality, that affects individual adaptation and refers to intergroup relations.
- Especially in regard to immigrant adolescents, the study of perceived discrimination is essential for the understanding of the negative social environment that they face.

Motti-Stefanidi, Berry, Chryssochoou, Sam, & Phinney, in press

Consequences of perceived discrimination

The perception of the self as the target of discrimination is associated with

- higher levels of depression and anxiety
- more behavioral problems
- more physical symptoms
- lower self esteem
- lower academic achievement and school adjustment.

e.g. García-Coll, Lamberty, Jenkins, McAdoo, et al., 1996;
Liebkind, Jasinskaya-Lathi, & Solheim, 2004;
Paradies, 2006

The Personal/Group Discrimination Discrepancy (PGDD)

- Members of minorities tend to perceive a higher level of discrimination directed at their group as a whole, but they tend to minimize their own experiences of discrimination.

Moghaddam, Stalkin, & Hutcheson, 1997;
Taylor et al., 1996

Personality attributes and perceived discrimination

- Individuals tend to perceive differently the discrimination against themselves and the discrimination against their group
- Personality has the potential to shape social information processing and subsequently affect the way the individual subjectively and uniquely perceives the discrimination.

Caspi & Shiner, 2006;
Shorey et al., 2002

Relevant findings

- Lower self-esteem and less personal and interpersonal control predict higher perceived personal discrimination, but not group discrimination.
- Positive individual characteristics are related with the perception of less discrimination against the self and more discrimination against the group
- Higher depression/anxiety and lower intergroup competence predict higher perceived personal discrimination

Motti-Stefanidi & Asendorpf, under review;
Phinney et al., 1998;
Shorey et al., 2002

Hypotheses

- Higher self esteem, and self efficacy, and fewer psychological symptoms, as well as Extraversion, Openness and Emotional Stability will predict less perceived discrimination against the self.
- No hypotheses can be drawn on the relationship between personality attributes and psychological symptoms and perceived group discrimination

Research question

- Whether personality attributes and/or psychological symptoms predict who will report perceiving
 - a. Being personally discriminated against and/or
 - b. Their ethnic group being discriminated

Participants

- **158 Albanian adolescents**

- **Sex** 83 (52.5%) boys
 75 (47.5%) girls

- **Generation status** 127 (80.4%) 1st gen.
 31 (19.6%) 2nd gen.

- **Age** Mean=15.6 years (SD=0.85)

Measures of perceived discrimination based on Phinney et al. (1998) and Verkuyten (1998)

- **Perceived discrimination against the self**

4 items; $\alpha = .85$

“How often do you feel treated unfairly in your school because of your ethnic origin?”

“How often do you feel welcome in the Greek society?”

- **Perceived discrimination against the group**

3 items; $\alpha = .75$

“How often do you feel that your schoolmates tease children from Albania?”

“How often do you think that others are unfair towards people of your ethnic group?”

Measure of personality

- **FFFK** (Asendorpf & Van Aken, 2003; 40 items).

Cronbach α s ranged from .52 to .65

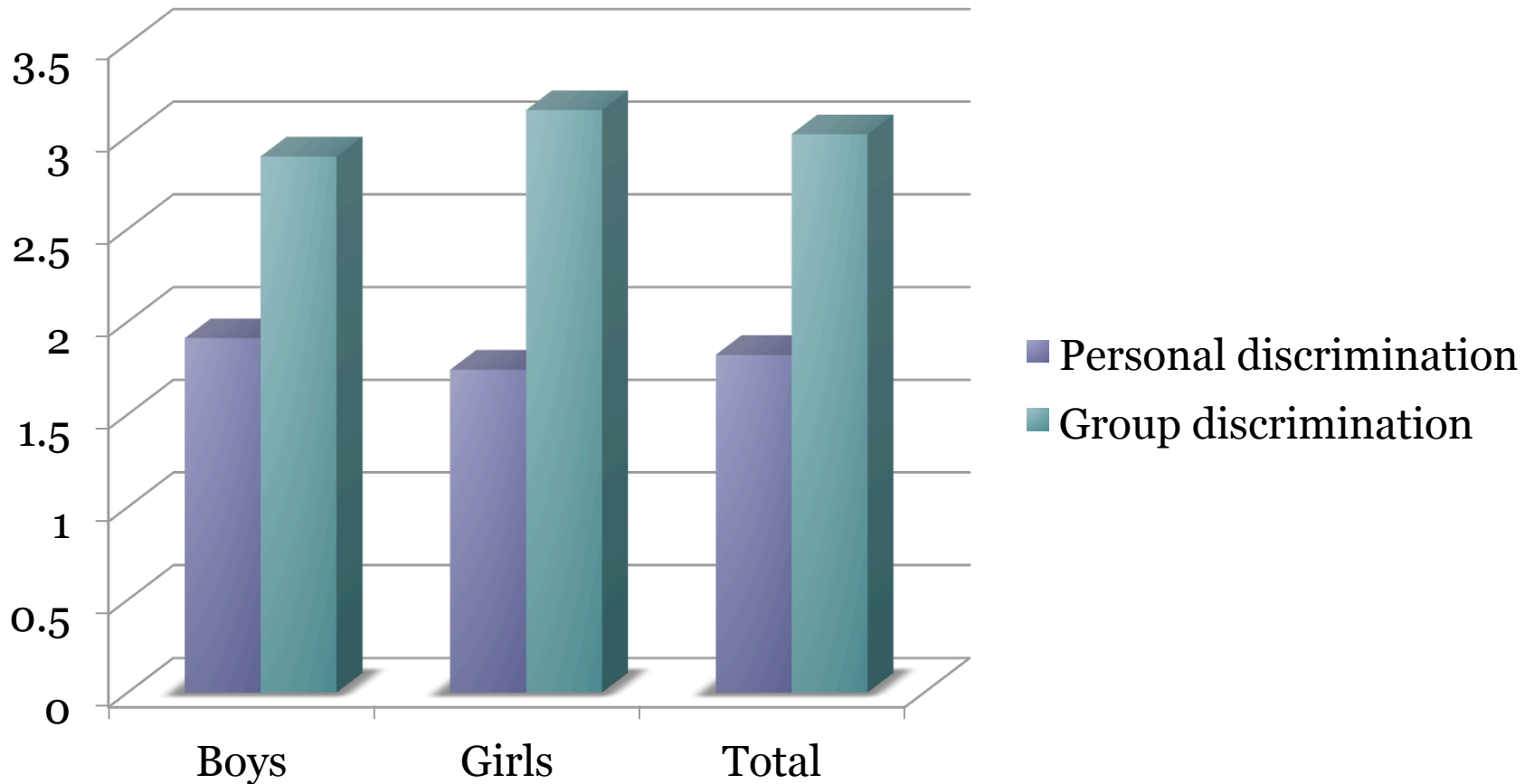
Measures of self-esteem and self-efficacy

- **Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale:**
10 item scale ($\alpha = .82$)
- **Bandura's Self-Efficacy Scale:**
44 items ($\alpha = .93$)

Measure of psychological symptoms

- **Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ;** Goodman, 1994): 25 items ($\alpha = .85$)

Means of personal and group perceived discrimination



Correlations of the personality attributes and psychological symptoms with perceived personal and group discrimination

	E	N	A	C	O	S-Ef	S-Es	SDQ
Group discrimination	-.020	.082	-.041	-.097	.035	.003	-.009	.149
Personal discrimination	.035	.006	.063	-.039	.050	-.273**	-.266**	.424**

Note: * p<.05, **p<.01

Furthermore

- Group and personal discrimination have been shown to be related ($r = .55, p < .01$)
- Therefore, we expected that group discrimination would predict personal discrimination.
- However, the fact that these correlations are modest, explaining at best about 25% of the variance, suggests that other factors and processes contribute to the variance in personal discrimination.

Results I

What is the unique contribution of self-efficacy, self-esteem, the five personality factors, and the SDQ subscales in the prediction of perceived discrimination against the self?

- ⇒ Step 1: Perceived Discrimination against the Group
- ⇒ Step 2: Sex, Immigrant generation
- ⇒ Step 3: Personality attributes / Psychological Symptoms, **separately**.

Hierarchical regression for the prediction of perceived self discrimination from perceived personal discrimination, demographics, and self-efficacy

Predictors at step 3	Perceived Discrimination against the Self
	B
Perceived Discrimination against the Group	.42***
Sex	-.16
Immigrant generation	-.19*
Self-Efficacy	-.18***
Total R²	.35***

Note: *p<.05, **p<.01, *** p<.0,001.

Hierarchical regression for the prediction of perceived personal discrimination at step 3

Predictors at step 3	B
Self-Efficacy	-.18***
Self-Esteem	-.19***
Extraversion	-.16*
Emotional Stability	-.06
Agreeableness	-.12
Conscientiousness	.02
Openness	-.15*
Emotional Problems	.59***
Conduct Problems	.65***
Hyperactivity / Inattention	.32*
Peer Relationship Problems	.72***
Total Psychological Symptoms	.69***

Lower levels of perceived discrimination against the self are predicted by:



- SELF-EFFICACY
- SELF-ESTEEM
- EXTRAVERSION
- OPENNESS



- EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS
- CONDUCT PROBLEMS
- HYPERACTIVITY / INATTENTION
- PEER RELATIONSHIP PROBLEMS
- TOTAL PSYCHOLOGICAL SYMPTOMS

Results II

What is the unique contribution of self-efficacy, self-esteem, the five personality factors, and the SDQ subscales in the prediction of perceived discrimination against the group?

- ⇒ Step 1: Perceived Discrimination against the Self
- ⇒ Step 2: Sex, Immigrant Generation
- ⇒ Step 3: Personality attributes / Psychological Symptoms, **separately**

Hierarchical regression for the prediction of perceived group discrimination from perceived personal discrimination, demographics, and self-efficacy

Predictors at step 3	Perceived Discrimination against the Group
	B
Perceived Discrimination against the Self	.70***
Sex	.14
Immigrant generation	-.12
Self-Efficacy	.12
Total R ²	.30

Note: *** p<.0,001.

Hierarchical regression for the prediction of perceived group discrimination at step 3

Predictors at step 3	B
Self-Efficacy	.12
Self-Esteem	.05
Extraversion	.12
Emotional Stability	.12
Agreeableness	.05
Conscientiousness	-.07
Openness	.00
Emotional Problems	-.22
Conduct Problems	-.44***
Hyperactivity / Inattention	-.25*
Peer Relationship Problems	-.33*
Total Psychological Symptoms	-.48**

Lower levels of perceived discrimination against the group are predicted by:



- CONDUCT PROBLEMS
- HYPERACTIVITY / INATTENTION
- PEER RELATIONSHIP PROBLEMS
 - TOTAL PSYCHOLOGICAL SYMPTOMS

Where perceived personal discrimination is concerned...

- Better intrapersonal adaptation and lack of externalizing symptoms seem to imply less perception of discrimination against the self.
- These results could mean either that adolescents with such positive attributes evoke more positive reactions from their social environment or that they minimize their experiences, possibly to protect their self esteem.

Motti & Asendorpf, under review;

Shorey, et al., 2002;

Taylor, et al., 1996

Where perceived group discrimination is concerned...

- Worse interpersonal adaptation, that is more externalizing symptoms, predict lower levels of perceived discrimination against the group.
- Worse interpersonal adaptation may also be related with lack of social support systems, such as other members of their ethnic group, and possibly, less identification with their ethnic group.

Motti-Stefanidi, Berry, Chrysochoou, Sam & Phinney, in press;
Phinney, Horenchzyk, Liebkind, & Vedder, 2001

A final note

- Perceived personal discrimination is predicted by group discrimination, and vice versa. However the first finding is particularly important, since perception of personal discrimination predicts adaptation.
- Positive interpersonal and intrapersonal attributes predict lower discrimination against the self, over and above perceived group discrimination.
- More psychological symptoms predict lower perceived discrimination against the group, over and above the perception of discrimination against the self.

Thank you